1:McIlwraith E-5 (1922-1924)1948
NE6 Bellacoola NE6

with a number of the large cone-shaped whistles used for *sisaok* ceremonial. Towards dawn, sounds come from these, and sometimes a dull thump is heard on the roof, as if a heavy being had landed there. At once there is great excitement within the house. The voices of supernatural people prove them to be at hand. No one is allowed to leave except a *sisaok siki*[9] who is skilled in dealing with *Mulakila*,[10] also called *Sixsixqutnam*, the supernatural being closely connected with the *sisaok* ritual. Those within can hear the voice of the *siki* raised as if he were speaking to someone at a distance.

"Chief, you have come too early," he says. "The house is not yet ready. Please return later."

He is answered by loud whistling, which grows fainter, as if the being who made it were moving away. In reality the young men are merely blowing less forcibly into the whistles.

[9]The accounts of all informants agree that much of the *sisaok* ritual was newly imported into Bella Coola from Bella Bella. According to some statements, *Putlas*, a Bella Coola chief who died between 1870 and 1880, married a Bella Bella wife, also one from Rivers Inlet, and it was these two women who brought with them as dower certain *sisaok* prerogatives. It is said that previous to that time the Bella Coola did not understand the use of the large cone-shaped whistles, nor were they able to summon the supernatural beings to the youths secluded in the back-room, nor to dispel the beings at the conclusion of the rites. On the other hand, some Bella Coola claim that their first ancestors brought the whistles with them from the land above. It is probable that the calling in of the supernatural beings is a recent addition to the potlatch, which accounts for the contradictory accounts, but whether or not the whistles are a new feature is more doubtful. It appears certain that the prerogative of *siki* has recently been obtained from the Bella Bella. *Siki* means "the one who cures," and the name is given to the man whose prerogative it is to tend the *hasiut* initiates in whom supernatural powers are located. In Bella Bella there is a similar functionary for *nusak* matters, known as a *hai-alakila*. Through intermarriage several Bella Coola have recently obtained this prerogative; in each case it is frankly stated that it has been derived from the Bella Bella. The Bella Coola apply to these, as foreword, the term *siki*, as they do for the *hasiut* "curer," though the Bella Bella name, *hai-alakila*, is used with equal frequency. The present *siki* have endeavoured to claim for themselves certain ceremonial functions formerly carried out by any *nusak*. In this account of a potlatch it is assumed that a *siki* is functioning on all occasions, but in many cases any senior *nusak* is considered sufficiently close to the supernatural beings to act satisfactorily. Until about 1870 it is clear that any *nusak* was regarded as capable of doing so.

[10]Knowledge of this being is said to have been acquired by the marriage of a certain *Smoaye* of Kimsquit to a Bella Bella woman in the beginning of time.

1:McIlwraith E-5 (1922-1924)948
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served ceremonial chastity and was, therefore, in a good position to receive premonitions of this kind. The next day, as they were paddling down the river, they came upon some treacherous ice. Forewarned, they hastily abandoned their canoe, one side of which was soon broken in the way *Tsälis* had described; if they had continued their journey they would certainly have been drowned. 787 *

The dreams thus far recorded have all been capable of simple explanation; in fact, their meaning is obvious, either visually or audibly. In addition, there are a number of types considered to be symbolic by the Bella Coola. There are no professional interpreters, but it is believed that in ancient times shamans learnt the significance of certain images and this knowledge has since been transmitted from generation to generation. [791] [954]

One type indicates a coming birth. If a woman dreams that she travels to some distant spot, under the ocean or into the mountains, and there takes something in her hand, it signifies that she will soon bear a male child; on the other hand, if she picks up some small object when gathering berries, a daughter will be born. A Kimsquit informant stated that before his birth, his mother dreamt that she had gone far under the mouth of the Dean River to the vicinity of Ḵwaqsna's house, where she had taken up a child. From this she knew she was pregnant and he was born in due course. If the scene of the dream is in the mountains, it means that the child will be a good hunter; if under water, that he will be a successful fisherman, as it proved in this case. There is a vague belief that death takes place either near the spot where the mother received indication of conception, or that the life and spirit of the deceased visit the place before setting out on their journey back from generation to generation. The old man from whom this information was obtained expects to meet death by drowning, though he is himself uncertain whether his premonition is due to his mother's dream or to the fact that there has been a tendency for this to occur in his family. 787 * 843

787 * [961] [796]

A. McDowell E-5 [1922-1924] 1948
MSS McDowell MSS

[Kusiak Society Initiation]

evil is that something strange has happened to the "mural." At intervals throughout the day he repeats this announcement, and towards nightfall goes around calling:

Shimap, shimap, kukuciani, "Care, care, ye members of the *kuciai* society, power has come to the son of the chief (or to the mural)."

The *kukuciai* assemble in X's house, taking their places around the fire; the uninitiated crowd near the doorway. X is seated among his relatives and some of the senior members of the society behind the fire. A herald calls out:

"I want a *sibi* to help X."

In every village there are at least two *kukuciai* who have, embedded with their *kuciai* names, the professional prerogative of acting as healer to every novice; it is believed that the ancestor of each obtained a name and this right through a revelation from some supernatural healer. Since that time the owner of the name has been able to insert some of his own supernatural power into a neophyte to enable him to survive the dangers of admission to the society. This is the fiction taught to the uninitiated. The profession of *sibi* can be transmitted by willing like any other prerogative and it occasionally happens that the same individual is *sibi* for both *kuciai* and *cuaxi*. In answer to the herald's call, the two *sibi* come forward and crouch behind the fire, one on either side of it. Their faces are blackened with soot, and each wears a blanket, decorated with dyed cedar-bark, thrown loosely over his shoulders, leaving the chest and stomach bare except for an apron of deer hooves or puffin beaks. Meanwhile bearing sticks are distributed among most of the *kukuciai* who strike furiously on the floor with them, without any attempt to keep time; the sole object is to produce the greatest din possible.

One of the *sibi* contorts himself in an amazing manner, presses his hands against his stomach as if to force something from it, and rolls from side to side on his haunches, until at length he produces, as if from his body, a small crystal (see Plate 5). He warms this in and for in his hands, then goes

[Dove category 116, p 84(L) - Analyst]

through the motion of throwing it to his partner, the crystal disappears! It has been pulled out of sight on the instant of throwing, but the presumption is that it has entered the other side who falls to the floor as if stricken down by the powerful object given to him. Now one of the *Salimobi*, who has been primed for the duty, strikes the recumbent man on the back, restoring him to consciousness. Slowly he pulls himself together, rising at intervals as if crushed beneath a heavy weight, and writhes until he finally produces a rock crystal from his stomach, as if it had been thrown to him. In reality it is his own which he has carried concealed from the beginning of the ceremony. He pretends to throw this to X, often so realistically that the novice blinks, expecting some object to strike him. All the time a *Salimobi*, it does not matter who, has been drinking water at intervals and spitting it out over the face of X, "to strengthen him." When X has received the stone, the bearing on the four-hearts, stilled during the transference of the crystal, breaks out again with full din. After a short interval the first *sibi* stops the noise, goes through the same contortions and produces, apparently from his stomach, another rock crystal, which as before he throws across to his partner who falls down, and later passes it to X. Again the bearing on the four is started. The same ritual is carried out until four, or sometimes only two, rock crystals have been given to X. Then the procedure is reversed. The second *sibi* goes to the novice and after much contortion draws from his stomach one of the crystals, which he pretends to throw back to his partner. As the latter makes the motion of catching it, he produces his own crystal which he, as it seems, forces into his own body. This is done for all the crystals (see Plate). At this juncture the uninitiated are told to leave.

One of the *sibi* now kneads the back of X's neck and goes through the motions of pulling something from it. The frightened youth realizes that his spirit is being drawn from him and his nerve, great in any case, is not lessened by the *sibi* taking it in his cupped hands to the fire where he snaps up

[Racist Society Initiation]

some value which he puts into his mouth and chews. Of course he mentioned only the value but X, unaware of this, is concerned for the loss of his agent. So that is removed to him and he is told that the *chi* has altered it from that of an uninitiated person to that of a doctor.[1] The psychological effect of this act on the mind of a young man who has not had time to adjust himself to his new knowledge and who is firmly convinced of the powers of the *chi* is tremendous.

The four *chi* now instruct two initiates sitting on either side of X to lie down to serve as a seat for him. They do so, irrespective of who they may be. If the novice is still ignorant of the full mysteries of the society, the *chi* announces that he is going to get a call for X. He walks around the house, pausing here and there as if seeking something, and then pounces as if he had caught an object between his hands. A whistle is heard, such as the novice knows accompanies the coming of every call, but he does not know that the noise is made by compressing a goat or bear bladder-whistle between two sticks held beneath the armpit. This is the 'mystery' of the strange noise.

"Do you know what makes that noise?" ask the two initiates on whom X is sitting.

If X denies all knowledge, the mystery is explained to him, and he is warned that he will be killed if he communicates the information to uninitiated persons. If he answers that he knows the cause, he is asked who has told him. Perhaps some lad has been pushing and has told X of what he has seen; in that case the over-inquisitive youth is at once initiated to prevent further leakage of information. As soon as X has learnt the great secret he moves to one side and the singers take their positions behind the fire. His father, or whoever is near by from whom he is to obtain his name, then stands up and exhibits its origin, telling which supernatural being is its person, and the locality of his repository. X sometimes re-

[1] This part of the rite has been carried to so many cases that many of the middle-aged initiates have forgotten it.

[illegible] 5 (1922-1924) 1968
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PLATE I

Photograph by H. I. Smith, National Museum of Canada

Old [illegible] a crystal from his stomach

[p. 84 (c)]

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NEA Bellacoola NEA

[No Cannibal Dance]

* 575 * 796 his song, which they now proceed to sing as though they had obtained it from X in his ravings; they have, of course, composed it themselves in advance. The words describe the experiences of X in the regions aloft. When the song has been practised, food, and later presents as "bandages" for the wounds, are distributed. Other gifts are often given to everyone, irrespective of whether or not the recipient has been bitten. A marshal functions as usual; then the people disperse.

[491]

Presently as night falls and the people are preparing for sleep, X goes outside with a number of *kukwitat* followers. On the sidewalk the singers, a number of *kukwitat* women, and men with drums have assembled. X begins his high pitched call of *ewe, ewe, ewe*, as if longing for meat; the whistle sounds at intervals and the singers begin their song with the women joining in. When the melody has ended, the party moves to a position outside another house where the same ceremony is repeated. X suddenly becomes frenzied, rushes madly from place to place, his *ewe, ewe, ewe* resounds, and he dashes into a dwelling, growling ferociously. The musicians pay no attention to his actions, but complete their singing of the same song outside every house. When this has been finished, the *kukwitat* gather in X's home to make him sufficiently heavy so that he can lie down. This is done by calling upon those individuals who have the prerogative of using the crystals at initiation. They come forward and, with wild gyrations, extract them from their stomachs and insert them into X's body through his ears, thus partially deadening him so that he can relax. The people disperse when this has been accomplished. As usual, the heralds have informed those living in the other houses of what has been taking place.

[424] [491]

The next morning the *kukwitat* construct a strong platform behind the fire on which X is supposed to rest for the next four days. In practice he can do almost anything he likes, provided that he is not seen by the uninitiated. The crystals pressed into his ears deafen him to small noises, but if he hears people talking loudly together, he at once becomes excited and rushes